

ILRC November Meeting

11-18-2020

Called to order at 1:05 p.m.

Katie Nelson opened the meeting and welcomed council members and participants.

- Roll Call of members- 8 members attended the meeting
 - Seth Harden
 - Kara Salazar
 - Mayor Debaun
 - Beth Tharpe
 - David Kovich
 - Tom Slater
 - Jeff Healy
 - Richard Beck
- Katie shared the mission of the council- “the purpose of the council is to collect information and provide educational and technical assistance to local governments regarding land use strategies and issues across the state.”

Approval of August 2020 minutes

- August meeting minutes were emailed to council members on October 30th and are available on the website
- Mayor Debaun made a motion to approve Mayor minutes
- Seth Harden seconded the motion
- Minutes were approved by roll call vote and the following members present voted to approve the minutes:
 - Seth Harden
 - Kara Salazar
 - Mayor Debaun
 - Beth Tharpe
 - David Kovich
 - Tom Slater
 - Richard Beck
- Jeff Healy abstained from the approval vote because he was not able to attend the August meeting

Introduction of members of the public on the call:

- Rob Davis, Fresh Energy
- Michael Retterer
- Brian Ross, Great Plains Institute
- Barbara Shae Cox
- Tyler, Innovatus Solar
- Brian Kortum

- Joe Miller
- Jeff Cummins
- Brock Harpur, Purdue
- Savannah Ploessl, Purdue

Seth Harden introduced the Pollinator-friendly solar discussion:

- Last meeting, we discussed putting together a resource to inform folks on pollinator friendly solar.
- Rob Davis shared that current filings show interest in developing 25,000 MW of solar power in Indiana. This has a potential land use impact of 193,500 acres.
- This issue is current to the ILRC's mission.
- We worked with folks at Purdue to put together an amendment to our land use guide.
- Will turn it over to Brock Harpur (Purdue) and his intern Savannah.

Brock- we were asked to put together a brief document outlining some of the considerations one would have to make when considering pollinator-friendly solar.

- What we put together was a brief document outlining what pollinator-friendly solar is, why it is being considered and some of the challenges when developing pollinator-friendly solar.
- In addition, we have policy planning consideration that one would want to have before implementing legislation.
- We end with some key considerations and examples of successful pollinator-friendly landscapes elsewhere.
- Guidance was almost entirely put together with our intern and Rob Davis.
- Any comments or questions?

Katie- this guidance was sent yesterday, so hopefully you had some time for review. Any questions?

Savannah Ploessl- we took a lot of inspiration from the urban section of the guidebook. The document has a good amount of information, so it is helpful to spend some time looking over it.

Brock- the document is currently with graphic designers and the final version will match the rest of the community planning guidebook.

Seth- thinking about our mission at ILRC, what sort of demand have you seen from decision-makers on this type of information?

Brock- I've directly talked to 5 counties and as many solar developers. This information is topical and in demand right now. In fact, after this I have a call scheduled with a solar developer.

Seth- any examples of successful implementation?

Brock- at the bottom of the document we included examples. Rob?

Rob Davis- there are successful examples of this around the country that have great applicability to Indiana. Large-scale projects have an easier and cheaper opportunity for pollinator-friendly due to the cost of mobilizing equipment to plant seed mixtures. 20-30 states have examples of doing this well.

Seth- are there any Indiana-specific projects? Completed or in planning phase?

Brock- there is one right outside of Purdue by Duke energy and there are more coming.

Jeff Healy- what is the relative cost of establishing this kind of habitat? As opposed to turf or bare ground? I work for an engineering company that engages in this. We have given them background information and haven't seen a lot of interest

Rob- we have a solar builder in Indiana that is developing a large project for Logansport. Tyler, can you share a comment?

Tyler- we are doing a 20 MW project with Logansport and a finance company will own the project.

- There is pollinator habitat in the whole array- 60-80 acres of property.
- Landowners are leasing out the property.
- They qualify to get the seed for free through a non-profit organization and are working with Cardno on site prep and planting of the mix.
- Site is well under construction and we will be planting habitat in the spring.
- Trying to find a happy medium between costs

Rob- the intent is for a cost neutral design alteration.

- The guidance that Purdue is publishing is for all projects to have something stabilizing the soil which will be a fixed cost.
- If you are already planting something, it is beneficial to include clovers or other flowering plants.
- No one is thinking of these as restoring a natural area.
- The guidance from Purdue is appropriate and shows through small and large-scale projects.

Brock- these sites are not prairie restorations- they are functional industrial sites.

- When one is getting a cost estimate for seed mixes it is important to keep in mind that they should not be looking to restore previous habitat.
- It is generally cost-effective.

Tyler- we did a study and found that doing pollinator mix is cheaper than putting in a turf grass mix in the long run because these solar sites are generally owned for at least 7 years. We found there are savings after year 3.

Jeff- is that economic comparison available anywhere?

Tyler- we have a basic excel spreadsheet that I can share if you would like- it contains the general numbers that we have used.

Jeff Healy- the decisions seem to be driven entirely on cost benefit in our clients. Anything that would advocate for cost neutral over a period of time would be beneficial to include with the document we are looking at

Brock- we can add something like that in our document as an appendix. There are also two additional appendixes that show the sample seed mixes- one with height restrictions and one without.

Kara- I posted the guidebook link from existing guidance documents in the chat. We will add this new addition as well.

Katie- it's a good idea to get something in the document about costs for this.

- We can look over that internally and we can send it out before the next meeting.
- We are not in a rush because this will be our only update to the guidebook. Any other updates we can take care of and send along.
- Thanks everyone for your work on this and presentation.

Katie moved on to discussing the draft internal project matrix and the project support application.

- We have been approached by a few different groups with questions on how the ILRC can promote or put our name on projects or documents.
- The ILRC hasn't done this before- normally it's a grassroots effort and it is our own work that gets put forward.
- We decided it might be helpful to come up with a review matrix to help councilors decide whether the ILRC would like to promote something.
- We wanted to help empower members to make those decisions.
- We will also evaluate the project application. These will both be internal documents.
- Application will be sent when someone approaches the ILRC for support of their project.
- Katie walked through the scoring matrix
 - This is not something that will be public- it is more for internal thinking to help guide our discussion.
 - There are 8 questions overall- alignment with mission and vision, target toward local and state efforts, research-based science, peer reviewed, focus on education rather than advocacy, fulfilling a need in the community or the state, support from local decision-makers and overall sustainability of the project.
- Would love feedback from council members?

Seth- each of the 8 questions are weighted equally currently?

Katie- yes but we can discuss doing it differently

Seth- if we have two projects that have all the same answers then it might be helpful for questions to be weighted differently- would help differentiate projects

Katie- that is a good point. Any other thoughts?

Kara- one point of clarification- #7 (support from local decision-makers) is a good question, but I wonder how it will be justified and demonstrated. Would it be fulfilled through a letter of support or in some other way?

Mayor Debaun- that was going to be my suggestion from the local government side. I would think you would want a letter of support or something from local decision-makers to validate that they are in support of the project

Katie- that is helpful. We can say something that includes letters of support, people verbally approving the project, etc.

Mayor Debaun- oftentimes this can be in the form of a non-binding resolution from local government so that is an option as well

Jeff Healy- why is the peer review question necessary? From an industrial standpoint- is that important?

Katie- not every project will get high scores on all of these. It is up to the council on how it is scored. If a project fulfills other components then a specific category might not be as important.

Kara- what if it's a statement where educational or written documents are peer-reviewed but others don't necessarily need it?

Rich Beck- in the neutral zone of question number 1- the terms "Marginal" and "Helps" don't seem to be very different. I would suggest changing it to the word "fulfills" in the positive section.

Katie- that is a good change. On #4, does changing the wording to technical assistance OR educational materials have been peer reviewed help the situation?

Jeff- I know there is a formal peer review process and then there is a process where we get approval from experts in the field. I'm not sure we need the full peer reviewed process.

Katie- Jeff, why don't you think about that between now and the next meeting and we can look at how to make those changes.

Kara- the process we went through for the guidance document is an example of a peer review. We use that for our extension projects

Rich Beck- do we need to specify who does the verification? That term is slightly confusing.

Katie- we can take out that word since using the language "peer reviewed." Verification is more of a synonym for peer reviewed.

Kara- I wonder if this is just a yes or no. Do we need an in between?

Rich- I would agree, it is yes or no

Kara- I like the idea of using this scoring sheet as a decision-making tool. It is not intended to be rigid. It is meant to help us think through these things. It is a helpful thing to make sure we are on the right track. If there are holes in a project this system will help us identify those

Rich- this is an excellent tool

Katie- we will make the quick changes with wording and then will take a second look at our next meeting.

- Hopefully we can have a final product that can be discussed and voted on for approval.
- I also have an opening paragraph on the application that mentions the ILRC's mission from Indiana Code. The paragraph asks them to complete the application and to answer the questions evaluated in the matrix.
- This helps those seeking support to see what the council is looking for and for our council members to see answers clearly.

Kara- would you want to have the educational product attached? We can add language for the applicant to include their project.

Katie- any other thoughts? We will fix this as well and send it with the matrix. Will take a vote at our next meeting. Kara will talk about 2021 land use summit.

Kara- will share notes from our Land Use Summit planning meeting on November 17th.

- Will update you on where we are and what we are working on.
- Targeting the dates between end of August and early October- end of August is looking most likely.
- Interested in using the Hendricks County conference facility again. Will ask about date availabilities next.
- Will plan for an in-person event but will also plan for virtual.
- Have been talking about overarching theme of integrating agriculture and natural resources with community planning.
- There has been a lot of discussion around comprehensive plan efforts and ensuring the overlay with ag and natural resources.
- Will have several different session tracks as well as keynote speakers. More concerted effort with outreach tables as well.
- We have climate change community planning as one session and that would include trends in the state- how to get started, examples, etc.
- Also interested in renewable energy siting- will include pollinator-friendly solar in that session.
- Overview of the state status- will look at incentive options, etc.
- Public engagement, conflict management, what engagement looks like virtually, etc.
- Hope to have a focus on incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion into these sessions.
- The final discussion is on innovation planning.
- The plan moving forward was for us to have this conversation with the council and then the committee is meeting again in December to start getting an agenda together.
- Any questions or discussion?

Mayor Debaun- you talked about educators on plan commissions and discussions on renewable energy

- In Shelby County we have 2-3 large projects being proposed.
- A lot of people are against it- have a common theme on contamination through ground water.
- When we talk about these projects do you think we will be able to get guidance available to the public on common items?

Kara- there is a project and a team launching a renewable energy ordinance and resource inventory for the state.

- The team is going to start working on that soon and it will be launched in January or February.
- Hoosiers for Renewables will be allocating funding for us.
- We are going to provide some background information on how things are looking in the state along with a database of ordinances. This should help provide some additional resources.
- Hopefully the summit will help identify additional experts.

Mayor Debaun- I think that is the best answer- it would help to be steered to a resource that might become available.

Jeff Cummins- Kara, would you touch on the climate change session?

Kara- we are working with various groups on this topic:

- Incorporating climate change and weather adaptation conversations into some of the environmental planning pieces- looking at different trends.
- Interested in knowing what communities are doing and what resources they are using.
- There are good examples of other adaptations being used around the state.

Jeff C- I might suggest consideration of something to do with carbon market development because that is tied to land use.

- This could look like a conversation related to climate and conservation products.
- We will be hosting something about it at our annual convention the focus will be on it's relation to carbon markets.
- It would be helpful if there was a tie-in or room for an individualized session.
- We would be happy to contribute to that.

Kara- that wasn't on the radar but would be helpful

Seth- TNC would be able to contribute to that too.

Rich- Will the Land Use Summit have an updated guide for local government published?

Kara- we are not planning for that and the reason is because it took a long time to do.

- At this juncture we were thinking we would let it stand and having additional amendments like the pollinator-friendly solar document included in the same format.
- If there are additional pieces then it would be reasonable for the committee to consider other projects.
- Looking at doing the summit every other year so we are probably looking at an update in the third cycle of the summit

Rich- I noticed there was no date on the guidebook so that makes sense

Seth- I have another bullet under renewable energy siting:

- We have a bat mitigation bank that we've developed on whether there needs to be mitigation done in paramount to species like bats.
- It is fairly innovative and fresh content (TNC is primary lead on this).

Kara- that sounds really interesting. We will add that.

Seth- there is a wetlands and streams mitigation program run by DNR. It is relatively new and not very well known yet- might be something worth informing people about.

Jeff Healy- another thing you might include is the topic of drainage- particularly regulated to drains on sites. This has become a large conversation with Indiana's history of utilizing fully drained soil. This topic might not be for this arena but it is something to consider

Rich- we are starting to experience running out of developable land for septic systems. Soils are not conducive to these systems and people building homes are realizing that septic systems can't be included.

Kara- I haven't gotten too deep into septic work but understand there are state level considerations.

Jeff Healy- this would likely be coming from the Indiana State Department of Health.

Kara- several counties are starting to develop inspection protocols but there is no state level requirement yet.

Rich- is that inspection going to be part of the sale of land?

Kara- it likely will be but I haven't done a lot of work in this area.

- Definitely an issue people are working on around the state.
- One of the other things we are looking into is how communities can share stories and experiences.
- It's okay if we don't have that component for every project, but if you have examples from the communities where you live then we would like to start getting some of those contacts together.

Katie- thanked Kara for her help. Broad discussion from council members? any public comments?

Mayor Debaun made a motion to adjourn the meeting

Richard Beck seconded the motion

Roll call was taken for adjournment and all members present voted yes to adjourn the meeting

Meeting adjourned at 2:16 p.m.